

Bible Lesson – Luke 22:24-27

Who is the Greatest?

Preparing the Passover

⁷ Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it.” ⁹ They said to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare it?” ¹⁰ And He said to them, “When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹ And you shall say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” ¹² And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there.” ¹³ And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

The Lord’s Supper

¹⁴ When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹ And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁰ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. ²¹ But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. ²² For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” ²³ And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.

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²⁴ And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ ²⁶ But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

1. Introduction

- A. We frequently discuss (or dispute) about who or which is the greatest.
 - I. Which is the greatest generation, greatest era for music, etc.
 - II. Who is the greatest coach, team, etc.

2. Two things we all desire

- A. Security: safety, some level of protection from that which could harm us.
- B. Significance: self-worth, respect of others, knowing our life has value and purpose.
 - I. Do I fit in, and if so, how and where.
- C. **Matthew 20:20-28** ²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. ²¹ And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.” ²² But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.” ²³ He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” ²⁴ And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first

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among you shall be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

3. V.24, Discussion or Dispute?

- A. The apostles are disputing (literally, arguing) over who is the greatest amongst them.
 - I. The timing is incredible...at the institution of the Lord's supper...really?
 - a. Jesus is about to die and they are arguing over which of them is the greatest.

4. The Dispute

- A. The text does not indicate that any are excluded from participating in the dispute.
 - I. Even if some did not participate with their voice, there is no indication that any were pure in heart.
- B. No indication that any are promoting another disciple, thus, more likely each is self-promoting.
- C. These are men that have been:
 - I. Called by Jesus
 - II. Discipled by Jesus
 - III. Experienced His grace in many ways
 - IV. Called and sent by Jesus to tell the world about Him
- D. Déjà vu...this is not the first time they have had this argument.
 - I. **Luke 9:46-48** ⁴⁶ An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, ⁴⁸ and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.”
 - II. You might think, “Boy, these guys sure are slow learners!”...how true, but,
 - a. If we are honest, we need only to look in the mirror to see another slow learner.
 - b. The beauty of the Gospel is that God loves slow learners...He is patient, He loves repeat offenders, which is what they were, and which is what we are.
- E. V.21-23, Preceding discussion, who is the betrayer?
 - I. It is interesting to note that just prior to arguing about who among them is the greatest, they are discussing who would be the one to betray Jesus.
- F. The root cause of their dispute seems to be tied to their lack of confidence in their own sense of security and significance.

5. Who are these men?

- A. Nobodies, unimportant, ordinary.
 - I. Tax collector, fisherman, etc.
 - II. Not the smartest, wealthiest, best looking, etc.
 - III. Again, we need only to look in the mirror...God uses the unimportant and ordinary to accomplish his work...**God uses you!**
- B. Focused on their own security (not being the betrayer) and their own significance (being the greatest).
 - I. Lost sight of their own sin
 - II. Driven by their own pride, ego
 - a. **Philippians 2:3** ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.

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- b. **James 3:16** ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
- c. **Proverbs 16:18-19** ¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.
¹⁹ It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

III. What if it were you at the table, would you have partaken in the debate?

C. A good reminder to let the source of your security and significance be found in God alone.

6. Where is your identity?

- A. Do you first and foremost find your identity in God?...and the life and circumstances he has planned for you?
- B. The tragedy of many Christians is that they turn to Jesus for forgiveness of their sins, but they then seek their security and significance in something other than Jesus.
 - I. And then question why things have not worked out as they would have liked.
- C. **Security** comes from knowing and believing you are being held securely in the hands of Jesus, no matter what your circumstances.
- D. **Significance** comes from being declared a child of God, never having it taken away, and being co-heirs with Christ for eternity. This allows you to live your life freely devoted to God, no matter the circumstances God has planned for you.

7. Observations

- A. No one is immune to the sin of selfish ambition.
 - I. It happened to Jesus' closest followers, seated at the table with Him. So yes, it can (and likely will) happen to you...repeatedly.
- B. So clear how pride leads to sin.
 - I. The connection between V.21-23 and V.24.
 - a. "Certainly **I'm** not the one who will betray Him...hey, maybe **I'm** the greatest."
 - II. Be careful that you also don't become filled with pride.
 - a. **Galatians 6:1** ¹ Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
- C. Where is your focus...pleasing God or pleasing man?
 - I. Jesus has already told them (Luke 9:46-48) that "the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."
 - II. We need to learn to live before an audience of one...Almighty God.
 - a. Remember **James 3:16** ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
- D. Refutes the Roman Catholic teaching that Peter was the recognized Head of the 12.
 - I. This dispute occurs after Peter's confession and after Jesus says "upon this rock I will build My church." (**Matthew 16:18**)
 - II. It seems very unlikely that the dispute would have occurred had God set apart Peter to be Head of the 12.
- E. The people God can and will use to accomplish his purpose
 - I. Garden variety sinners...you have that in common with God's original chosen 12.
 - II. Do you believe God can use you to build His kingdom?...He can and does.
 - a. When you think He can't, then you depend on yourself.

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- III. Reminder of how...v.26²⁶ **But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.**
 - a. You don't have to be wealthy, or popular, or a Church officer...all you have to be is a servant of the Lord Jesus.
- F. Who is the greatest member of Covenant ARP?
 - I. It doesn't matter...not a competition.
 - II. US Army Ad Slogan, 1981-2001, "Be all you can be" ...Be all you can be, serving God for His Glory.
 - III. God is calling each one of us to be great...by humbly submitting ourselves to be the least, a servant, a foot washer.
 - a. **Matthew 23:11**¹¹ **But the greatest among you shall be your servant.**
 - b. **Mark 9:35**³⁵ Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, **"If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."**
 - c. **Mark 10:43-45**⁴³ **But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;**⁴⁴ **and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.**⁴⁵ **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,**
 - d. **Mark 12:41-44 [The Widow's Offering]**⁴¹ And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, **"Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;**⁴⁴ **for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."**
 - IV. Let God be your source of security and significance!